

Another program available to victims is the Offender Accountability Letter Program

Offenders who have sincere remorse for the harm they caused their victims sometimes submit accountability letters to the Montana Department of Corrections Accountability Letter Bank.

If the letter is appropriate, the Victim Programs Manager or Victim Liaisons will attempt to locate the victim(s). The victim(s) decides whether to accept the letter or not. You will not know if your victim accepts the letter.

While under Department of Corrections supervision, offenders are not allowed to send letters directly to their victims.

To discuss a **Victim-Offender Dialogue**, please speak with your case manager or Probation & Parole Officer

What may be helpful prior to participating in a Victim Offender Dialogue (VOD):

- ♦ **Complete the program Victim Impact: Listen & Learn**
- ♦ **Write an Accountability Letter**
- ♦ **Speak with your case manager or Probation and Parole Officer to determine if you are ready to participate in a VOD**
- ♦ **Ask yourself what you hope to gain by participating in a VOD**
- ♦ **Ask yourself if you truly understand the ripple effect of your crime**
- ♦ **Speak with the VOD Facilitator about questions and concerns you may have**
- ♦ **Acknowledge that the purpose of the dialogue is to provide an opportunity for healing of the victim**

Victim-Offender Dialogue

A Brochure for Offenders

Department of Corrections
Victim Programs
Please contact your case manager or Probation Officer with questions.

Victim-Offender Dialogue: Helping Victims Heal

What is a Victim-Offender Dialogue (VOD)?

The Montana Department of Corrections (MDOC) Victim Services assists adult victims who wish to meet face-to-face with the person who committed the criminal offense against them under the guidance of trained facilitators. The dialogue focuses on the harm to the victim and the offender's responsibility. Only a victim can initiate a victim-offender dialogue.

Why would a victim want to meet with their offender?

Victims often have questions only the person who perpetrated the offense can answer. What happened before and during the crime? Was my loved one in pain? Why did you fire your gun when you knew there were innocent bystanders? What did you do with our property you stole?

Victims may want to talk about how their lives have been affected by the crime and how they feel about what happened. Victims often want to see for themselves what kind of person the offender has become, and whether he or she is sorry.

Most victims who participate in dialogues find that the process moves them forward in their healing process.

Why would an offender agree to participate in a dialogue?

Many offenders are sincerely remorseful for their crimes and want an opportunity to accept responsibility for their actions.

Answering the victim's questions and providing information about the crime is one way offenders can demonstrate personal accountability and attempt to make amends.

How can I participate in a victim-offender dialogue?

Offenders are not allowed to initiate a victim-offender dialogue. If a VOD is requested, an offender may decline the request to participate, but most accept.

Participation in a Victim Offender Dialogue provides no tangible benefits, such as early parole consideration, for participating.

How does a victim-offender dialogue work?

Once a victim requests a victim-offender dialogue and the offender agrees, preparation begins. The Victim Programs Manager or a Victim Liaison consults with the offender's case manager and treatment staff to determine if a dialogue is appropriate and unlikely to cause the victim more harm.

Next, one or two volunteer facilitators meet repeatedly with the victim and offender. Often, preparation takes months.

How do I know if a victim-offender dialogue is for me?

The Victim Programs Manager or Victim Liaison and VOD Facilitators can help. MDOC usually does not allow dialogues in domestic violence or stalking cases due to the additional risk and possible trauma it poses to the victim.

Parents or legal guardians may participate in a victim-offender dialogue on behalf of child victims.

The victim programs manager may decide that a dialogue is not appropriate due to risk of physical or emotional harm to anyone involved.

Where does a victim-offender dialogue take place?

If you are in prison or a locked community treatment program, the dialogue must occur there.

If you are on probation or parole, the victim-offender dialogue might take place at a probation and parole office.

What if I change my mind?

Any of the parties may decide at any time to discontinue the victim-offender dialogue process.

Victims sometimes process their feelings during the preparation phase and discover that they do not need to go forward with the dialogue.

